

Horny rhinos can't breed because of Brexit, warn zoos

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

Scores of zoos including London Zoo have warned that breeding schemes for bison, rhinos, monkeys and other endangered animals are being harmed by Brexit red tape.

About 1,400 animals a year used to be transferred between British aquariums or zoos and those in Europe. Last year, the number fell to just over 200.

More than 75 groups have signed an open letter asking Rishi Sunak to fix the problem. Signatories include Sea Life London Aquarium, Chessington World of Adventures in Surrey, Blackpool Zoo and Twycross Zoo in Warwickshire.

Zoo breeding is vital for animals under threat in the wild. European bison, some of which were released in the UK last year, were saved from extinction after only 54 were left in zoos. UK zoos hold a quarter of the European zoo population of the critically endangered black rhino.

The lack of agreement on UK-EU animal transfers meant that moving an endangered golden lion tamarin to London Zoo was delayed for 17 months. Colchester Zoo faced a similar hold-up over a vulnerable pileated gibbon. Exporting Asiatic lions from Edinburgh Zoo took more than a year.

The team behind the reintroduction of bison said that navigating paperwork had taken ten months. Mark Habben, a director at the Wildwood Trust, which worked on the bison scheme, said: "We're in the middle of a climate crisis and an extinction crisis. Yet we're being hindered by paperwork. It's ridiculous."

London Zoo said the situation was hurting endangered wildlife and ran counter to the goals of a global deal to save nature that the government agreed in Montreal last month.

"Our zoos are custodians. With the increase in red tape it is difficult to move the same number of animals around," said Malcolm Fitzpatrick, the zoo's chief zoological officer. Before Brexit, the zoo transferred 400 animals a year. Last year it moved only 38.

The longest delay for London Zoo has been the 18 months it took to export a giraffe to the Czech Republic. Specialist hauliers now have to be certified to operate in the UK and the EU, leaving only one company that can move giraffes.

Graeme Dick, of Durrell Zoo, Jersey, said that it was easier to send animals to Australia and the US than France. Transport costs meant that moving a gibbon from France cost £8,000, which would have been £1,000 before Brexit.



Heads of state The death masks of Napoleon and Stalin could each fetch £22,000 at a sale by Sworders in Essex next week

Dolphins and fishermen join forces

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

One hunter has a net to catch fish but cannot see them. Another can follow the fish but not catch them. It makes sense that they co-operate — even if they come from different species.

Drawing on more than a decade's observations, researchers have shed new light on a rare alliance between two apex predators in southern Brazil: dolphins and humans. Both species are

interested in mullet, a small fish that travels in large, fast groups which easily evade lone dolphins. Humans also struggle to catch them from the beach because they hide under the murky water and may not approach the shore.

The study shows dolphins herd mullet towards fishermen in Laguna, Santa Catarina. The humans watch for a signal from the dolphins — often a dive below the surface — then cast nets. Mullet that evade the humans form

smaller groups, which are easier for dolphins to catch. "The actions of dolphins facilitate the human fishing; and the human fishing facilitates the dolphins," said Mauricio Cantor of Oregon State University, who led the study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Dolphins that engaged in co-operative fishing had a 13 per cent rise in survival rates. Fishermen were 17 times more likely to catch fish when dolphins were present.

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